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Chiapas:



The Southeast in Two Winds

By Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds

A Storm and a Prophecy

The First Wind: The One From Above

Chapter One

This chapter tells how the supreme government was affected by the poverty of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas and endowed the area with hotels, prisons, barracks, and a military airport. It also tells how the beast feeds on the blood of the people, as well as other miserable and unfortunate happenings.

Suppose that you live in the North, Center, or West of this country. Suppose that you heed the old SECOTUR (Department of Tourism) slogan, "Get to know Mexico first." Suppose that you decide to visit the Southeast of your country and that in the Southeast you choose

to visit the state of Chiapas. Suppose that you drive there (getting there by airplane is not only expensive but unlikely, a mere fantasy: There are only two "civilian" airports and one military one). Suppose that you take the Transistémica Highway. Suppose that you pay no attention to the Army barracks located at Matías Romero and that you



continue on to Ventosa. Suppose that you don't notice the Department of Government's immigration checkpoint near there (the checkpoint makes you think that you are leaving one country and entering another). Suppose that you decide to take a left and head towards Chiapas. Several kilometers further on you will leave the state of Oaxaca and you will see a big sign that reads, "WELCOME TO CHIAPAS." Have you found it? Good, suppose you have. You have entered by one



that his country is free and that this is the result of its people governing themselves, and he dreams that he is at peace with himself and with the world. He dreams that he must fight to obtain this dream, he dreams that there must be death in order to gain life. Antonio dreams and then he awakens... Now he knows what to do and he sees his wife crouching by the fire, hears his son crying. He looks at the sun rising in the East, and, smiling, grabs his machete.

The wind picks up, he rises and walks to meet others. Something has told him that his dream is that of many and he goes to find them.

The viceroy dreams that his land is agitated by a terrible wind that rouses everything, he dreams that all he has stolen is taken from him, that his house is destroyed, and that his reign is brought down. He dreams and he doesn't sleep. The viceroy goes to the feudal lords and they tell him that they have been having the same dream. The viceroy cannot rest. So he goes to his doctor and together they decide that it is some sort of Indian witchcraft and that they will only be freed from this dream with blood. The viceroy orders killings and kidnappings and he builds more jails and Army barracks. But the dream continues and keeps him tossing and turning and unable to sleep.

Everyone is dreaming in this country. Now it is time to wake up...

The storm is here. From the clash of these two winds the storm will be born, its time has arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the wind from below is coming...

The prophecy is here. When the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world but something better.

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

The Lacandona Jungle, August 1992

Subcomandante



everything returns to calm.

In Marqués de Comillas, in the township of Ocosingo, campesinos cut wood to survive. The judicial officials arrest them and confiscate the wood for their commander. The Indigenous people decide to stop being silent and they take the agents' vehicles and kidnap the agents. The Governor sends Public Security police who are kidnapped in the same way. The Indigenous people hold on to the trucks, the wood and the prisoners. They let the prisoners go. There is no response. They march to Palenque to demand solutions and the Army oppresses them and kidnaps their leaders. They hold on to the vehicles. Negotiating commissions come and go. The government lets the leaders go, the campesinos return the vehicles. The conflict appears to resolve itself but the causes persist. With the same outward appearance everything returns to calm.

In the municipal seat of Ocosingo, 4,000 Indigenous campesinos from the organization ANCIEZ march from different points of the city. Three marches converge in front of the Municipal building. The municipal president doesn't know what it's all about and flees. On the floor of his office is a calendar indicating the date: April 10, 1992. Outside Indigenous campesinos from Ocosingo, Oxchuc, Huixtán, Chilón, Yajalon, Sabanilla, Salto de Agua, Palenque, Altamirano, Margaritas, San Cristóbal, San Andrés and Cancuc dance in front of a giant image of Zapata painted by one of them, recite poetry, sing, and speak. Only they are listening. The landowners, businessmen, and judicial officials are closed up in their homes and shops, the federal garrison appears deserted. The campesinos shout that Zapata lives and the struggle continues. One of them reads a letter addressed to Carlos Salinas de Gortari [President of Mexico, 1988–present] in which they accuse him of having brought all of the Agrarian Reform gains made under Zapata to an end, of selling the country with the North American Free Trade Agreement and of bringing Mexico back to the times of Porfirio Díaz. They declare forcefully that they will not recognize Salinas' reforms to Article 27 of the Political Constitution. At two o'clock in the afternoon the demonstration disperses, in apparent order, but the causes persist. With the same outward appearances everything returns to calm.

Abasolo is an ejido in the township of Ocosingo. For years, campesinos took land that legally belonged



of the three existing roads into Chiapas: The road into the northern part of the state, the road along the Pacific coast, and the road you entered by are the three ways to get to this Southeastern corner of the country by land. But the state's natural wealth doesn't leave only by way of these three roads. Chiapas loses blood through many veins: Through oil and gas ducts, electric lines, railways, through bank accounts, trucks, vans, boats and planes, through clandestine paths, gaps, and forest trails. This land continues to pay tribute to the imperialists: petroleum, electricity, cattle, money, coffee, banana, honey, corn, cacao, tobacco, sugar, soy, melon, sorghum, mamey, mango, tamarind, avocado, and Chiapaneco blood flows as a result of the thousand teeth sunk into the throat of the Mexican Southeast. These raw materials, thousands of millions of tons of them, flow to Mexican ports and railroads, air and truck transportation centers. From there they are sent to different parts of the world: The United States, Canada, Holland, Germany, Italy, Japan, but with the same fate—to feed imperialism. The fee that capitalism imposes on the Southeastern part of this country oozes, as it has since from the beginning, blood and mud.

A handful of businesses, one of which is the Mexican State, take all the wealth out of Chiapas and in exchange leave behind their mortal and pestilent mark: in 1989 these businesses took 1,222,669,000,000 pesos from Chiapas and only left



behind 616,340,000,000 pesos worth of credit and public works. More than 500,000,000,000 pesos went to the belly of the beast.

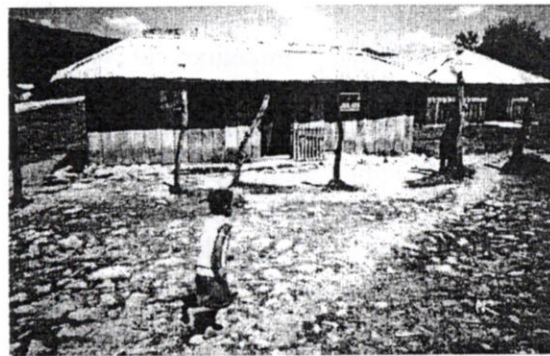
In Chiapas, Pemex [the national oil company] has 86 teeth clenched in the townships of Estación Juárez, Reforma, Ostuacán, Pichucalco, and Ocosingo. Every day they suck out 92,000 barrels of petroleum and 517,000,000,000 cubic feet of gas. They take away the petroleum and gas, and in exchange leave behind the mark of capitalism: ecological destruction, agricultural plunder, hyperinflation, alcoholism, prostitution, and poverty. The beast is still not satisfied and has extended its tentacles to the Lacandona jungle: eight petroleum deposits are under exploration. The paths are made with machetes by the same campesinos who are left without land by the insatiable beast. The trees fall and dynamite explodes on land where campesinos are not allowed to cut down trees to cultivate. Every tree that is cut down costs them a fine that is 10 times the minimum wage, and a jail sentence. The poor cannot cut down trees, but the petroleum beast can, a beast that every day falls more and more into foreign hands. The campesinos cut them down to survive, the beast to plunder.

Chiapas also bleeds coffee. Thirty-five percent of the coffee produced in Mexico comes from this area. The industry employs 87,000 people. Forty-seven percent of the coffee is for national consumption and 53% is exported abroad, mainly to the United States and Europe. More than 100,000 tons of coffee are taken from this state to fatten the beast's bank accounts: in 1988 a kilo of pergamino coffee was sold abroad for 8,000 pesos. The Chiapaneco producers were paid 2,500 pesos or less.

The second most important plunder, after coffee, is beef. Three million head of cattle wait for middle-men and a small group of businessmen to take them away to fill refrigerators in Arriaga, Villahermosa, and Mexico City. The cattle are sold for 400 pesos per kilo by the poor farmers and resold by the middle-men and businessmen for up to ten times the price they paid for them.

The tribute that capitalism demands from Chiapas has no historical parallel. Fifty-five percent of national hydroelectric energy comes from this state, along with 20% of Mexico's total electricity. However, only a third of the homes in Chiapas have electricity. Where do the 12,907 kilowatts produced annually by hydroelectric plants in Chiapas go?

In spite of the current trend toward ecological awareness, the plunder of wood continues in Chiapas's forests. Between 1981 and 1989, 2,444,777 cubic meters of precious woods, conifers, and tropical trees were taken from Chiapas. They were taken to Mexico City, Puebla, Veracruz, and Quintana Roo. In 1988 wood exports brought a revenue of 23,900,000,000 pesos, 6,000% more than in 1980.



tragedy across the skies of Jalisco. They arrived at the capital of old New Spain, now Mexico, exactly 500 years after the foreign nightmare imposed itself in the night of this land. They arrived and all the honest and noble people, of which there are still some, listened to them and the voices that oppress them today in the Southeast,

North, Center and West of the country also listened to them. They walked back, another 1,106 kilometers, their bags filled with promises. Again, nothing came of it....

In the municipal seat of Simojovel campesinos belonging to the CIOAC organization were attacked by people paid by local ranchers. The campesinos in Simojovel have decided to stop being silent and to respond to the ranchers' threats. Campesinos surround the municipal seat. Nothing and no one enters or leaves without their consent. The Federal Army withdraws to its barracks, the police retreat, and the state's feudal lords demand arms in an attempt to restore order and respect. Negotiating commissions come and go. The conflict appears to have resolved itself. But the causes persist. With the same outward appearances everything returns to calm.

In the town of Betania, in the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Indigenous people are regularly detained and harassed by judicial agents for cutting firewood for their homes. The judicial agents say that they are only doing this to protect the environment. The Indigenous people decide to stop being silent and kidnap three judicial officials. They take the Panamerican highway and cut off communications to the east of San Cristóbal. At the intersection between Ocosingo and Comitán, campesinos are holding the judiciaries and they demand to speak to the viceroy before they will agree to unblock the road. Business comes to a halt, tourism collapses. Negotiating commissions come and go. The conflict appears to resolve itself but the causes persist. With the same outward appearances,



rebellion has no counterpart, that it is outside the national experience. This is a lie. The exploited Chiapaneco's specialty is the same as that of exploited people from Durango, Veracruz, or the plateau of northern Mexico: to fight and to lose. If the voices of those who write history speak excessively, it is because the voice of the oppressed does not speak...yet. There is no historic, national, or regional calendar that has documented each and every rebellion against this system that is imposed and maintained with blood and fire throughout the national territory. In Chiapas, this rebel voice is only heard when it shakes the world of the landowners and businesspeople. Indeed, the phantom of Indigenous barbarism strikes government-building walls and gains access with the help of revolution, trickery, and threats. If the rebellion in the Southeast loses, as the rebellions lost in the North, Center, and West, it is not the result of bad timing, it is because wind is the fruit of the land; it comes in time and ripens in the breasts of those who have nothing but dignity and rebelliousness. And this wind from below, that of rebellion and dignity, is not just an answer to the wind from above. It is not just an angry response or the destruction of an unjust and arbitrary system. Rather it carries with it a new proposal, a hope of converting rebellion and dignity into freedom and dignity.

How will this new voice make itself heard in these lands and across the country? How will this hidden wind blow, this wind which now blows only in the mountains and canyons without yet descending to the valleys where money rules and lies govern? This wind will come from the mountains. It is already being born under the trees and is conspiring for a new world, so new that it is barely an intuition in the collective heart that inspires it...

Chapter Five

This chapter tells how the dignity of the Indigenous people tried to make itself heard, but its voice only lasted a little while. It also tell how voices that spoke before are speaking again today and that the Indians are walking forward once again but this time with firm footsteps. They are walking together with other dispossessed peoples to take what belongs to them. The music of death that now plays only for those who have nothing will now play for everyone. It also tells of other frightful things which have happened and, they say, must happen.

The Indigenous march to Xi'Nich, composed of campesinos from Palenque, Ocosingo, and Salto de Agua, demonstrates the system's absurdity. These Indigenous people had to walk 1,106 kilometers to make themselves heard. They had to go to the capital of the Republic in order for the central power to arrange a meeting with the viceroy. They arrived in Mexico City when capitalism was painting a frightful



The honey that is produced in 79,000 beehives in Chiapas goes entirely to US and European markets. The 2,756 tons of honey produced annually in the Chiapaneco countryside is converted into dollars which the people of Chiapas never see.

Of the corn produced in Chiapas, more than half goes to the domestic market. Chiapas is one of the largest corn producers in the country. Sorghum grown in Chiapas goes to Tabasco. Ninety percent of the tamarind goes to Mexico City and other states. Two-thirds of the avocados and all of the mameys are sold outside of the state. Sixty-nine percent of the cacao goes to the national market, and 31% is exported to the US, Holland, Japan, and Italy. The majority of the bananas produced are exported.

What does the beast leave behind in exchange for all it takes away?

Chiapas has a total area of 75,634.4 square kilometers, some 7.5 million hectares. It is the eighth largest state and is divided into 111 townships organized, for the purposes of looting, into nine economic regions. Forty percent of the nation's plant varieties, 36% of its mammal species, 34% of its reptiles and amphibians, 66% of its bird species, 20% of its fresh-water fish, and 80% of its butterfly species are found in Chiapas. Seven percent of the total national rainfall falls in Chiapas.



But its greatest wealth is the 3.5 million people of Chiapas, two-thirds of whom live and die in rural communities. Half of them don't have potable water and two-thirds have no sewage service. Ninety percent of the rural population pay little or no taxes.

Communication in Chiapas is a grotesque joke for a state that produces petroleum, electricity, coffee, wood, and cattle for the hungry beast. Only two-thirds of the municipal seats have paved-road access. Twelve thousand communities have no other means of transport and communication than mountain trails. Since the days of Porfirio Di'az, the railroad lines have serviced capitalism rather than the people. The railroad line that follows the coast (there are only two lines: the other crosses the northern part of the state) dates back to the turn of the century, and its tonnage is limited by the old bridges that cross the canyons of the Southeast. The only port



in Chiapas, Puerto Madero, is just one more way for the beast to extract the state's resources.

Education? The worst in the country. At the elementary school level, 72 out of every 100 children don't finish the first grade. More than half of the schools only offer up to a third grade education and half of the schools only have one teacher for all the courses offered. There are statistics, although they are kept secret of course, that show that many Indigenous children are forced to drop out of school due to their families' need to incorporate them into the system of exploitation. In any Indigenous community it is common to see children carrying corn and wood, cooking, or washing clothes during school hours. Of the 16,058 classrooms in 1989, only 106 were in Indigenous zones.

Industry? Look, 40% of Chiapas's "industry" consists of Nixtamal mills, tortillas, and wood furniture mills. Large companies (petroleum and electricity), 0.2% of the total industry, belong to the Mexican government (and soon to foreigners). Medium-sized industry, 1.4% of the total industry, is made up of sugar refineries and fish, seafood, flour, milk, and coffee processing plants. Of the state's industry, 94% of the area's industry is micro-industry.

The health conditions of the people of Chiapas are a clear example of the capitalist imprint: One-and-a-half million people have no medical services at their disposal. There are 0.2 clinics for every 1,000 inhabitants, one-fifth of the national average. There are 0.3 hospital beds for every 1,000 Chiapanecos, one third the amount in the rest of Mexico. There is one operating room per 100,000 inhabitants, one half of the amount in the rest of Mexico. There are 0.5 doctors and 0.4 nurses per 1,000 people, one-half of the national average.

Health and nutrition go hand in hand in poverty. Fifty-four percent of the population of Chiapas suffer from malnutrition, and in the highlands and forest this percentage increases to 80%. A campesino's average diet consists of coffee, corn, tortillas, and beans.

This is what capitalism leaves as payment for everything that it takes away...



voice speaks to them about justice and freedom, it speaks to them about socialism, about hope...the only hope that exists in the world. The oldest of the old in the Indigenous communities say that there once was a man named Zapata who rose up with his people and sang out, "Land and Freedom!" These old campesinos say that Zapata didn't die, that he must return. These old campesinos also say that the wind and the rain and the sun tell the campesinos when to cultivate the land, when to plant and when to harvest. They say that hope is also planted and harvested. They also say that the wind and the rain and the sun are now saying something different: that with so much poverty, the time has come to harvest rebellion instead of death. That is what the old campesinos say. The powerful don't hear; they can't hear, they are deafened by the brutality that the Empire shouts in their ears. "Zapata," insists the wind, the wind from below, our wind.

The Second Wind: The Wind From Below

Chapter Four

This chapter tells how dignity and defiance joined hands in the Southeast, and how Jacinto Pérez's phantoms run through the Chiapaneco highlands. It also tells of a patience that has run out and of other happenings which have been ignored but have major consequences.

These people were born dignified and rebellious, brothers and sisters to the rest of Mexico's exploited people. They are not just the product of the Annexation Act of 1824, but of a long chain of ignominious acts and rebellions. From the time when cassock and armor conquered this land, dignity and defiance have lived and spread under these rains.

Collective work, democratic thinking, and subjection to the decisions of the majority are more than just traditions in Indigenous zones. They have been the only means of survival, resistance, dignity, and defiance. These "evil ideas," as they are seen by landholders and businessmen, go against the capitalist precept of "a lot in the hands of a few."

It has mistakenly been said that the Chiapas



XEOCH: Rap and lies for the campesinos.

In Ocosingo and Palenque, Cancun and Chilón, Altamirano and Yajalón, the Indigenous people are celebrating. A new gift from the supreme government has made life a little happier for the peons, small landowners, landless campesinos and impoverished inhabitants of the ejidos. They have been given a local radio station that reaches the most isolated corners of eastern Chiapas. The station's programming is fitting: Marimbas and rap music proclaim the good news. The Chiapaneco countryside is being modernized. XEOCH transmits from the township of Ocosingo and can be found at 600 Mhz AM from four in the morning till 10 at night. Its news shows abound with lies. They tell of the "disorientation" that "subversive" lay-workers spread among the peasantry, the abundance of aid credits that are never received by the Indigenous communities, and the existence of public works that have never been built. The viceroy is also given time on the air so that he can remind the population with threats that not all is lies and rap music; there are also jails and military bases and a penal code which is the most repressive in the Republic. The penal code punishes any expression of discontent. The laws against demonstrations, rebellion, inciting to riot, etc., demonstrate that the viceroy is careful to maintain everything in order.

There isn't any reason to fight. Socialism has died. Long live conformity and reform and the modern world and capitalism and all of the cruelties that are associated with them! The viceroy and the feudal lords dance and smile euphorically in their palaces. Their joy is disconcerting for the few free-thinkers who live in the area. Even they are incapable of understanding. They are without hope. It is true that one must fight, but the balance of forces isn't favorable, now isn't the time. We must wait longer, maybe years. We must be alert against the adventurers. We must make sure that nothing happens in the cities or in the countryside, that everything continues as always. Socialism has died. Long live capitalism! Radio, the print media, and television proclaim it. It is repeated by some ex-socialists who are now sensationally changed.

Not everyone hears the voices of hopelessness and conformity. Not everyone is carried away by hopelessness. There are millions of people who continue on without hearing the voices of the powerful and the indifferent. They can't hear; they are deafened by the crying and blood that death and poverty are shouting in their ears. But, when there is a moment of rest, they hear another voice. They don't hear the voice that comes from above; they hear the voice that is carried to them by the wind from below, a voice that is born in the Indigenous heart of the mountains. This



This part of the Mexican territory, which willingly annexed itself to the young independent republic in 1824, appeared in national geography when the petroleum boom reminded the country that there was a Southeast (82% of Pemex's petrochemical plants are in the Southeast; in 1990 two-thirds of public investment in the Southeast was in energy). Chiapas's experience of exploitation goes back for centuries. In times past, wood, fruits, animals, and men went to the metropolis through the veins of exploitation, just as they do today. Like the banana republics, but at the peak of neoliberalism and "libertarian revolutions," the Southeast continues to export raw materials, just as it did 500 years ago. It continues to import capitalism's principal product: death and misery.

One million Indigenous people live in these lands and share a disorienting nightmare with mestizos and ladinos: their only option, 500 years after the "Meeting of Two Worlds," is to die of poverty or repression. The programs to improve the conditions of poverty, a small bit of social democracy which the Mexican state throws about and which, under the regime of Salinas de Gortari carries the name Pronasol, are a joke that brings bloody tears to those who live under the rain and sun.

Welcome! You have arrived in the poorest state in the country: Chiapas.

Suppose that you drive on to Ocosocoatla and from there down to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital. You don't stay long. Tuxtla Gutierrez is only a large warehouse which stores products from other parts of the state. Here you find some of the wealth which will be sent to whatever destinations the capitalists decide. You don't stay long, you have just barely touched the lips of the wild beast's bloody jaws. You go on to Chiapas de Corzo without noticing the Nestlé factory that is there, and you begin to climb up into the mountains. What do you see? One thing is certain, you have entered another world, an Indigenous world. Another world, but the same as that in which millions of people in the rest of the country live.

Three hundred thousand Tzotziles, 120,000 Choles, 90,000 Zoques, and 70,000 Tojolabales inhabit this Indigenous world. The supreme government recognizes that "only" half of these 1,000,000 Indigenous people are illiterate.

Continue along the mountain road and you arrive in the region known as the Chiapaneco highlands. Here, more than 500 years ago, Indigenous people were the majority, masters and owners of land and water. Now they are only the majority in population and in poverty. Drive on until you reach San Cristo'bal de las Casas, which 100 years ago was the state capital (disagreements among the bourgeoisie robbed it of the dubious honor of being the capital of the poorest state in Mexico). No, don't linger. If Tuxtla Gutierrez is a large warehouse, San Cristo'bal is a large



market. From many different routes the Tzotziles, Tzeltales, Choles, Tojolabales, and Zoques bring the Indigenous tribute to capitalism. Each brings something different: wood, coffee, cloth, handicrafts, fruits, vegetables, corn. Everyone brings something: sickness, ignorance, jeers, and death. This is the poorest region of the poorest state in the country. Welcome to San Cristo'bal de las Casas, a "Colonial City" according to the history books, although the majority of the population is Indigenous. Welcome to Pronasol's huge market. Here you can buy or sell anything except Indigenous dignity. Here everything is expensive except death. But don't stay too long, continue along the road, the proud result of the tourist infrastructure. In 1988 there were 6,270 hotel rooms, 139 restaurants, and 42 travel agencies in this state. This year, 1,058,098 tourists visited Chiapas and left 250,000,000,000 pesos in the hands of restaurant and hotel owners.

Have you calculated the numbers? Yes, you're right: there are seven hotel rooms for every 1,000 tourists while there are only 0.3 hospital beds per 1,000 Chiapaneco citizens. Leave the calculations behind and drive on, noticing the three police officials in berets jogging along the shoulder of the road. Drive by the Public Security station and continue on passing hotels, restaurants, large stores and heading towards the exit to Comitán. Leaving San Cristóbal behind you will see the famous San Cristóbal caves surrounded by leafy forest. Do you see the sign? No, you are not mistaken, this natural park is administered by...the Army! Without leaving your uncertainty behind, drive on...Do you see them? Modern buildings, nice homes, paved roads...Is it a university? Workers' housing? No, look at the sign next to the cannons closely and read: "General Army Barracks of the 31st Military Zone." With the olive-green image still in your eyes, drive on to the intersection and decide not to go to Comitán

so that you will avoid the pain of seeing that, a few meters ahead, on the hill that is called the Foreigner, North American military personnel are operating, and teaching their Mexican counterparts to operate radar. Decide that it is better to go to Ocosingo since ecology



feudal lords, consists of methods more subtle than bombardments. There is no mention in the press of this murderous plot which costs lives and land as in the days of the Conquest.

The Committee for Citizen Defense continues to carry out its proselytizing work, holding meetings to convince the rich and poor of the city of Ocosingo that they should organize and arm themselves so that the campesinos won't enter the city because they will destroy everything, without respecting the rich or the poor. The viceroy smiles with approval.

Chapter Three

This chapter tells how the viceroy had a brilliant idea and put this idea into practice. It also tells how the Empire decreed the death of socialism, and then put itself to the task of carrying out this decree to the great joy of the powerful, the distress of the weak and the indifference of the majority. It tells of Zapata and how he is said to be still be alive. It also tells of other disconcerting events.

The viceroy is worried. The campesinos refuse to applaud the institutional pilage written into the new Article 27 of the Constitution. The viceroy is enraged. The poor aren't happy with being exploited. They refuse to humbly accept the charity that Pronasol spreads around the Chiapaneco countryside. The viceroy is desperate. He consults his advisors. His advisors tell him an old truth: Jails and military bases aren't enough to ensure continued domination. It is also necessary to control people's thoughts. The viceroy is disturbed. He paces his palace. Then he stops and smiles.



rebellion. These rancher and business "patriots" and "believers" know how to prevent rebellion: the existence of privately financed, armed paramilitary groups trained by members of the Federal Army, Public Security police and state law is well known by the campesinos who suffer from their threats, torture and gunshots.

A few months ago, Father Joel Padrón from the parish of Simojovel was arrested. Accused by the region's ranchers of initiating and taking part in land take-overs, Father Joel was arrested by state authorities and held in the Cerro Hueco Jail in the state capital. The mobilization of the members of the Diocese of San Cristóbal (those of Tuxtla Gutierrez and Tapachula were conspicuous in their absence) and a federal compromise succeeded in obtaining the parish priest Padro'n's freedom.

While thousands of campesinos marched in Tuxtla Gutierrez to demand Padrón's freedom, ranchers in Ocosingo sent their paramilitary forces to clear out property-owning campesinos. Four hundred men, armed by the ranchers, destroyed and burned houses, beat Indigenous women and murdered a campesino, Juan, by shooting him in the face. After the expulsion, the paramilitary forces- composed mostly of workers from local ranches and small-property owners proud of partaking in raids with the young ranchers-drove along the region's roads in pickup trucks provided by their masters. Ostentatiously displaying their arms, drunk and intoxicated, they shouted: "Ranchers are number one!" and warned everyone that it was only the beginning. Undaunted, municipal authorities in Ocosingo and soldiers stationed in the region looked passively on the gunmen's triumphant parade.

In Tuxtla Gutierrez, almost 10,000 campesinos marched in favor of Father Padón's release. In a corner of Ocosingo, Juan's widow buried her husband, victim of the proud ranchers. There was no march or protest petition for Juan's death. This is Chiapas.

Recently, Viceroy González Garrido was the protagonist of a new scandal, which was uncovered because the press reported the story. With the viceroy's approval, Ocosingo's feudal lords organized the Committee for Citizen Defense, a blatant attempt to institutionalize their neo-Porfirista paramilitary forces that keep order in the countryside of Chiapas. Surely nothing would have happened had it not been for the discovery of a plot to assassinate the parish priest Pablo Ibarren and the nun María del Carmen, along with Samuel Ruiz, the Bishop of San Cristóbal. The plot was reported by the honest Chiapaneco press, which even now exists, and reached national forums. There were retractions and denials; the viceroy declared that he maintains good relations with the Church and named a special committee to investigate the case. The investigation yielded no results, and the waters returned to their course.



and all that nonsense is very fashionable. Look at the trees, breath deeply...Do you feel better? Yes? Then be sure to keep looking to your left, because if you don't you will see, seven kilometers ahead, another magnificent construction with the noble symbol of SOLIDARIDAD on the facade. Don't look. I tell you, look the other way. You don't notice that this new building is...a jail (evil tongues say that this is a benefit of Pronasol; now campesinos won't have to go all the way to Cerro Hueco, the prison in the state capital). No brother, don't lose heart, the worst is always hidden: Excessive poverty discourages tourism. Continue on, down to Huixtán, up to Oxchuc, look at the beautiful waterfall where the Jatate river, whose waters cross the Lacandona Jungle, begins. Pass by Cuxulja and instead of following the detour to Altamirano drive on till you reach Ocosingo: "The Door to the Lacandona Jungle..."

Good, stay a while. Take a quick tour around the city... Principal points of interest? The two large constructions at the entrance to the city are brothels, next door is a jail, the building further beyond, a church, this other one is a beef-processing plant, that other one, Army barracks, over there is the court, the Municipal building, and way over there is Pemex. The rest are small piled-up houses which crumble when the huge Pemex trucks and ranch pick-up trucks pass by.

What does it look like? A Porfirista-type large- landed estate? But that ended 75 years ago! No, don't follow the road that goes to San Quintín, in front of the Montes Azules Reserve. Don't go to where the Jatate and Perlas rivers join, don't go down there, don't walk for three eight-hour days, don't go to San Martín and see that it is a very poor and small community, don't approach that shed that is falling to pieces. What is it? A sometimes church, school, meeting room. Now it is a school. It is 11 a.m.. No, don't go closer, don't look in, don't look at the four groups of children riddled with tapeworms and lice, half- naked, don't look at the four young Indigenous teachers who work for miserable pay for which they have to walk



three days, the same three days that you just walked, to collect. Don't notice that the only division between the classrooms is a small hall. Up to what grade do they teach here? Third. No, don't look at the posters which are the only thing that the government has sent to these children. Don't look at them: They are posters about AIDS prevention.



Better for us to move on, let's return to the paved roads. Yes, I know that it is in bad condition. Let's leave Ocosingo, continue to admire the countryside... The owners? Yes, ranch owners. What is produced? Cattle, coffee, corn... Did you see the National Indigenous Institute? Yes, the one as you leave the city. Did you see those pickup trucks? They are given on credit to Indigenous campesinos. They only take unleaded gas because it's better for the environment... There is no unleaded gas in Ocosingo? Well, that's not a big thing... Yes, you are right, the government is worried about the campesinos. Of course evil tongues say that there are guerrillas in these mountains and that the government's financial aid is really to buy Indigenous people's loyalty, but these are rumors, surely they are just trying to undermine Pronasol... What? The Citizen's Defense Committee? Oh yes! It consists of a group of "heroic" ranchers, traders, and corrupt union bosses who organize small guards to threaten the people. No, I already told you that the Porfirista large-landed estate was done away with 75 years ago... It would be better for us to move on... At the next intersection take a left. No, don't go towards Palenque. Let's go to Chilón... Pretty, no? Yes.

Yajalon...it's very modern, it even has a gas station... Look, there's a bank, the municipal building, the courthouse, over there the Army... It looks like another hacienda? Let's go and you won't see those other large, modern buildings on the outskirts of town, along the road to Tila and Sabanilla with their big beautiful SOLIDARIDAD signs, you won't see that it is...a jail.

Good, we have arrived at the intersection. Now to Ocosingo...Palenque? Are you sure? Okay, let's go. Yes, the countryside is beautiful. Are those ranches? You're correct: they produce cattle, coffee, wood. Look, we're already at Palenque. A quick tour of the city? Okay. Those are hotels, over there restaurants, the municipal building, the courthouse, those are the Army barracks, and over there... What? No, I already know what you're going to tell me... Don't say it... Tired? Okay, we'll stop for a bit. You don't want to see the pyramids? No? Okay. Xi'Nich? Ah...an Indigenous march. Yes, it's going to Mexico City. How far? 1,106 kilometers. Results? The government receives their petitions. Yes, that's all. Are you still tired? More? Let's wait... To Bonampak? The road is very bad. Okay, let's go. Yes, the panoramic route... This is the Federal Military Reserve, that other one belongs to the Navy, the one over there belongs to the Department of Government... Is it always like this? No, sometimes they top it off with a campesinos' protest march. Tired? Do you want to go back? Okay. Other places? Different places? In what country? Mexico? You will see the same. The colors will change, the languages, the countryside, the names, but the people, the exploitation, the poverty and death are the same. Just



look closely in any state in the Republic. Well, good luck...And if you need a tourist guide please be sure to let me know. I'm at your service. Oh! One more thing. It will not always be this way. Another Mexico? No, the same...I am talking about something else, about other winds beginning to blow, as if another wind is picking up...

Chapter Two

This chapter tells the story of the Governor, an apprentice to the viceroy, and his heroic fight against the progressive clergy and his adventures with the feudal cattle, coffee and business lords. It also tells other equally fantastic tales.

Once upon a time there was a viceroy made of chocolate with a peanut for a nose. The viceroy's apprentice, Governor Patrocinio González Garrido, in the manner of the old monarchs who were put in power by the Spanish crown during the Conquest, has re-organized the geography of Chiapas. The assignment of spaces to the urban and rural categories is a somewhat sophisticated exercise of power but when directed by Mr. González Garrido's denseness, it has reached exquisite levels of stupidity. The viceroy decided that cities with services and benefits should be for those who already have everything. And he decided, the viceroy that is, that the masses are fine out in the open, exposed to wind and rough weather, and that they only deserve space in the jails, which never cease to be uncomfortable. Because of this, the viceroy decided to construct jails in the outskirts of the cities so that the proximity of the undesirable and delinquent masses would not disturb the rich. Jails and Army barracks are the principal works promoted by this governor in Chiapas. His friendship with ranchers and powerful businessmen is a secret to no one. Neither is his animosity for the three dioceses which regulate the state's Catholic life. The Diocese of San Cristóbal, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, is a constant menace to González Garrido's reorganizing project. Hoping to modernize the absurd system of exploitation and extraction which prevails in Chiapas, Patrocinio González comes up against the stubbornness of religious and secular figures who support and preach Catholicism's option for the poor.

With the hypocritical applause of Aguirre Franco, the Bishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez, and the mute approval of the Bishop of Tapachula, González Garrido sustains and gives new life to the "heroic" conspiracies of ranchers and businessmen against the members of the Diocese of San Cristóbal. "Don Samuel's teams," as they are called by some, are not made up of inexperienced believers: Before Patrocinio González Garrido had even dreamed of being state governor, the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas preached the right to freedom and justice. For one of the country's most backward bourgeoisie, the agricultural bourgeoisie, this could only mean one thing:

